

PHYSICS TODAY

Volume 59, Issue 7
01 July 2006 • page 22
<https://doi.org/10.1063/1.2337819>

ISSUES AND EVENTS

Brodsky to retire from AIP in 2007

Karen H. Kaplan

Marc H. Brodsky, who guided the American Institute of Physics—publisher of PHYSICS TODAY and a number of journals and other print and online products—through organizational and financial challenges and expanded its outreach programs during his tenure as its executive director and CEO, will step down next year after more than 13 years at the organization's helm.

Brodsky announced in May that he expects to retire in March 2007 following AIP's spring Governing Board meeting. He assumed his role in November 1993, succeeding Kenneth Ford, who had served for seven years.

At press time, AIP's executive committee was expected to convene a search team in June to seek Brodsky's successor. Mildred Dresselhaus, chair of both the Governing Board and executive committee, said during a telephone interview in May that it was unknown at the time whether the search would be global or confined to candidates from the US.

Dresselhaus lauded Brodsky's achievements and performance and said he skillfully navigated the delicate path between the business side of the organization and its physics-related publishing, service, education, and outreach programs.

"Marc [has] unique capabilities," Dresselhaus said. "Most physicists don't really have a good business sense. AIP is physics on one side, so the person who runs the organization has to relate to the physics community. But at the same time AIP is a business, so you have to be a businessman. We don't have so many people around who have both skills."



Brodsky

Stronger alliance

Dresselhaus praised Brodsky for successfully working to forge a stronger alliance between AIP and its 10 member societies: the American Physical Society; the Optical Society of America; the Acoustical Society of America; the Society of Rheology; the American Association of Physics Teachers; the American Crystallographic Association; the American Astronomical Society; the American Association of Physicists in Medicine; AVS: Science & Technology of Materials, Interfaces, and Processing; and the American Geophysical Union. AIP is the not-for-profit umbrella for those physics and physics-related societies, whose membership collectively exceeds 134 000. Occasionally, Dresselhaus said, the relationship between AIP and some of the societies had been strained.

Brodsky did much to broaden AIP's service to the physics community, Dresselhaus noted. Under his leadership the organization built up its outreach programs, particularly in the areas of public information, government relations, and education. Newer developments include a syndicated news service that supplies stories about science and its impact on everyday life to TV stations around the nation, a stronger support system for the societies' dealings with the federal government, and improved student benefits.

Besides PHYSICS TODAY, its flagship publication, AIP publishes the journals *Applied Physics Letters*; *Chaos: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Nonlinear Science*; *Geochemical Transactions*; *Journal of Applied Physics*; *The Journal of Chemical Physics*; *Journal of Mathematical Physics*; *Journal of Physical and Chemical Reference Data*; *Low Temperature Physics*; *Physics of Fluids*; *Physics of Plasmas*; and *Review of Scientific Instruments*. It also publishes conference proceedings—last year it published 62 volumes—and co-publishes five virtual journals and the magazine *Computing in Science & Engineering*. In addition, AIP distributes or provides services to many dozens of other journals.

Dresselhaus said the search committee will look for a candidate with superb business and social skills and the ability to work with the global physics community. The right candidate will also understand the political environment in Washington, DC, she noted.

Transitions

Under Brodsky's stewardship, AIP—which aims to advance and diffuse the knowledge of the science of physics and its applications to human welfare—pulled through a knotty

period in the 1990s that was a result of both the fall of the Soviet Union and the internet's increasing competition with print publishing.

With the dissolution of the USSR, Brodsky said in a recent interview with PHYSICS TODAY, he and senior AIP staff realized Russian-language science journals would not be as important worldwide as they had been for decades before the end of the cold war. Although AIP had been involved since the 1950s in translating and publishing such journals, its participation gradually decreased, ending in 2005.

Brodsky was also responsible for making many of AIP's published products accessible via the internet, a move that broadened the organization's reach globally and established a much larger potential customer and readership base. AIP made the then-revolutionary move to the internet by 1995, far earlier than many other publishers, Brodsky noted. He said making AIP magazines and journals accessible online was—and remains—a challenge, because many readers balk at paying to read material on the internet. He added that it costs a publisher at least as much to prepare an article for online publication as it does for print.

An uncertain financial picture was not all that Brodsky faced during his tenure. In September 2004, Brodsky was a leader in the filing of a publishers' and authors' suit against the US Office of Foreign Assets Control over its attempt to regulate publication of manuscripts from certain nations. Shortly after the suit was filed, OFAC amended its regulations, confirming AIP's ability to publish without asking government permission. In 1989 and 1993, a commercial journal publisher filed lawsuits against AIP, APS, and Heinz Barschall in the US, Germany, Switzerland, and France over a study—published in PHYSICS TODAY and the *Bulletin of the American Physical Society*—that showed the societies' journals were more cost-effective than most others on the market. The ordeal ended in 2001 after 13 years of legal wrangling, when the publisher withdrew an appeal in France. Courts in the US, Germany, and Switzerland had already ruled in favor of AIP and APS.

While Brodsky heads to his retirement secure in the knowledge that he will leave AIP in a healthy condition, he warned that the physics community has more work ahead. Support and funding for science is in need of continual renewal, he stressed, and physicists must always work to connect to the public.

Brodsky, who came to AIP after a 25-year career at IBM's Thomas J. Watson Research Center in Yorktown Heights, New York, said he has not decided what he will do upon his retirement. "My plans are fluid and ill defined," he said.